Least developed countries have been seeking complete exemption from any further commitments in support or protection of agriculture. While a number of developing countries support flexibility to safeguard food and livelihood security through the application of SP products and SSM instruments, most developed and some developing country Members insist that these instruments should not be used to deny market access.

As may be seen, while there are common interests and concerns between India and some other WTO Members, divergences in positions remain on the level of ambition as well as on key issues in the negotiations.

The negotiations are scheduled to be concluded by 1 January, 2005.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Export of the products of DWCRA self-help groups

2698. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any initiative on the part of Government to export products of DWCRA self-help groups with a common brand name with assistance from UNO;

(b) if so, the steps taken, so far;

(c) if not, the steps Government intend to take to make the self-help group movement more sustainable and to supplement efforts of the States like Andhra Pradesh where DWCRA is a success story;

(d) whether there is any proposal to rope in MNCs to market the DWCRA products; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) Government of Andhra Pradesh has taken following steps to make the self-help groups more sustainable:—

(i) Encouragement of Women Self Help Group under Swaranjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) to play the role of both producers and sellers.

(ii) Promotions of buyer-seller meets and establishing DWCRA Bazaars.

(iii) Gruhamitra, a new concept for the sale of products through Public Distribution System outlets.

(iv) Rural Development Department has involved APNA BAZAAR (a non-profit organization promoting consumer awareness) in establishment of 1100 consumer retail outlets in various parts of Andhra Pradesh. The owners of Apna Bazaar outlets would get an average of 10% on the total sales.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Question does not arise.

Price stabilisation fund for plantation sector

2699. SHRI R.P. GOENKA :

SHRI SURENDRA LATH :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal has been formulated to seek funds from the World Bank and other multilateral agencies to enhance the Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF) created for the plantation sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof, with its present status; and

(c) the details of other initiatives being taken, if any, to provide relief to the plantation sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI CHENNAMANENI VIDYASAGAR RAO): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Concerned with the problems being faced by growers of plantation commodities like tea, coffee and natural rubber, due to the low prices, Government has taken several measures to provide necessary relief in this sector. The major initiatives include :

* Rephasement/restructuring of loans taken by growers of tea and coffee from commercial banks

* Providing interest relief of 5% to small growers and 3% to large growers of coffee on the working capital loans taken from financial institutions